



# FEMA

## Information from Fire Department Increased Awareness

**Rancho Bernardo, CA** - Bette Blankenship became familiar with defensible space and other ways to mitigate her property from the effects of wildfires through brochures her children brought home from school. The brochures came from San Diego's fire department, which was in the process of providing information about fire prevention and mitigation to students at schools in the Rancho Bernardo area. After she read the materials, Blankenship knew she had to take action, and did.

She is convinced that the type of materials used in upgrading her home, the removal of trees and plants prone to burn and spread fire, and the expansive back yard that serves as defensible space saved her home from the Witch Fire in 2007, while homes directly across the street were lost.

When Blankenship and her family moved to their home in 1998, the lower portion of their .75-acre property was covered with avocado and citrus trees. After learning about fuel modification, Blankenship and her husband, Gregg, started removing the hazardous trees from their back yard. The effort took three years at a cost of \$7,000. Bette started planting fire-resistant plants in 2002. Ice plant and other fire-resistant plants of a variety of species now cover their back-yard.

The Witch Fire in October 2007, which devastated much of their neighborhood, started near Santa Ysabel and spread to Ramona, Rancho Bernardo, Poway and Escondido. Burning embers, driven by powerful winds generated by Santa Ana conditions, flew over Interstate 15, spawning fires west of the highway. The Witch Fire continued west, causing significant damage in Lake Hodges, Del Dios, West Rancho Bernardo, and parts of Rancho Santa Fe.

Far and away the biggest of 24 wildland fires that burned in the seven-county disaster area in Southern California, the Witch Fire caused two deaths and injured 40 firefighters, according to Cal Fire, the state's fire agency.

The Blankenship home, constructed in 1978, has concrete roof tiles, stucco walls, enclosed eaves, double pane windows, and the fences and wood on exteriors are treated with heat-resistant materials.



San Diego County,  
California



### Quick Facts

Sector:

**Private**

Cost:

**\$7,000.00 (Estimated)**

Primary Activity/Project:

**Vegetation Management**

Primary Funding:

**Homeowner**